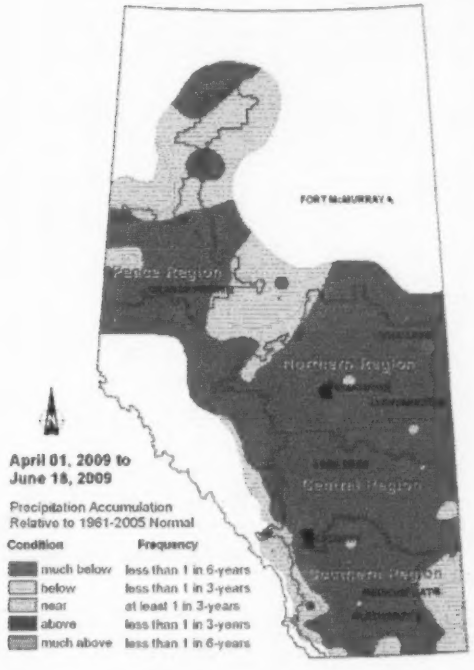
Crop Conditions as of June 18, 2009

Dry conditions are a concern for producers in the province. This is mainly as a result of the lack of precipitation in this crop season, with many areas receiving less than 50 per cent of their long-term averages (for the period of April 1 to June 18). Also contributing to the dry conditions were the below average winter snowfall and a low carryover of moisture reserves from the last crop season. During the last two weeks, most areas of the province have received only 5-30 mm of precipitation. With minimal rainfall received, dry conditions prevail in most areas of the North East Region and eastern parts of the Central Region, where seeds in some fields have not yet germinated. Provincially, surface moisture is rated as 46 per cent poor, 34 per cent fair, 19 per cent good, and one per cent excellent, while the sub-surface moisture is reported as 49 per cent poor, 37 per cent fair, and 14 per cent good. Rain showers are badly needed across the province. Table 1 below provides estimates of sub-surface moisture conditions in Alberta.

With the recent warm temperatures, crops have been recovering from frost and showing some improvements, but in many areas, this has been limited, due to the lack of moisture. Many fields have reported low counts of canola plants per square feet. As well, some frost-damaged fields have been reseeded to barley for forage production. Overall, crop development this year is about two weeks behind normal. Spring cereals are generally tillering, and canola is mostly in the 3-6 leaf stage. With respect to crop conditions, spring wheat and barley are rated as 22 per cent poor, 47 per cent fair, 29 per cent good, and two per cent excellent, while canola is 42 per cent poor, 32 per cent fair, 21 per cent good, and five per cent excellent. Winter wheat is just beginning to head out, and is reported as 36 per cent poor, 45 per cent fair, 17 per cent good, and two per cent excellent. The rating of dry peas is 30 per cent poor, 41 per cent fair, 27 per cent good, and two per cent excellent.

Producers are also very concerned with the slow pasture and tame hay growth. In many areas, pasture growth is minimal, resulting in producers feeding their cattle forages and feed grains. Some hay fields are also being used for grazing. This is the case, especially in the North East Region and eastern parts of the Central Region. Provincially, pasture conditions are rated as 63 per cent poor, 29 per cent fair, and eight per cent good. The rating of tame hay growth is 59 per cent poor, 29 per cent fair, and 12 per cent good. The shortage of water supplies on pasture is also a concern.



Spraying for post-emergence weed control is well under way, and is estimated at 42 per cent complete. Also, pest problems are being reported, including grasshoppers, flea beetles, cutworms, wireworms, and gophers.

Table 1: Estimates of Sub-Surface Moisture Conditions, Alberta

	Poor	Fair	Good	Excellent	Total
South	11%	53%	36%	0%	100%
Central	49%	33%	18%	0%	100%
North East	70%	28%	2%	0%	100%
North West	68%	29%	3%	0%	100%
Peace	46%	43%	11%	0%	100%
Alberta	49%	37%	14%	0%	100%

Source: Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development

Our thanks to Alberta Agricultural Fieldmen, staff of AFSC and the Alberta Ag-Info Centre for their partnership and contribution to the Alberta Crop Reporting Program.

REGIONAL ASSESSMENTS:

The 2009 Alberta Crop Report Series continues to provide summaries for the following five regions:

Region One: Southern (Strathmore, Lethbridge, Medicine Hat, Foremost)

- The region has received various amounts of precipitation during the last two weeks. Overall, surface moisture is reported as 19 per cent poor, 43 per cent fair, 36 per cent good, and two per cent excellent, while the rating of sub-surface moisture is 11 per cent poor, 53 per cent fair, and 36 per cent good.
- With some recent rain and warm temperatures, crop growing conditions are improving, although the lack of moisture is a concern in some areas. Major and specialty crops are mostly in fair to good condition. Crop development varies significantly, and is mostly two weeks behind normal. Due to damage from frost and strong wind, some reseeding has occurred. Irrigation operations are well underway.
- The growth of pasture and tame hay has been slow. Overall, pasture is rated as 37 per cent poor, 43 per cent fair, and 20 per cent good or excellent, with slightly better ratings reported for tame hay. First cut haying operation under irrigation has just begun.

Region Two: Central (Rimbey, Airdrie, Coronation, Oyen)

- The recent rain showers have brought some precipitation to most areas of the region. Despite the moisture received, dry conditions remain a serious concern, particularly in eastern parts of the region. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 42 per cent poor, 38 per cent fair, and 20 per cent good, while the sub-surface moisture is reported as 49 per cent poor, 33 per cent fair, and 18 per cent good.
- Frost damage has resulted in some canola fields reseeded to barley. Overall, crop development is about two weeks behind normal. Due to the lack of moisture, seeds in some fields have not yet germinated. With respect to crop conditions, spring cereals are rated as 30 per cent poor, 57 per cent fair, and 13 per cent good, while canola is reported as 55 per cent poor, 41 per cent fair, and four per cent good.
- Pasture and tame hay are reported as 73 per cent poor, 23 per cent fair, and four per cent good.

Region Three: North East (Smoky Lake, Vermilion, Camrose, Provost)

- Dry conditions remain a serious concern in the region, as spotty rain showers have brought limited amounts of precipitation during the last two weeks. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 69 per cent poor, 28 per cent fair, and three per cent good, while the sub-surface moisture is reported as 70 per cent poor, 28 per cent fair, and two per cent good. A good rainfall is needed in the region.
- There are reports of frost (on June 8-9) causing damage to grasses, alfalfa and annual crops. As a result, some canola fields have been reseeded to cereals for forage production. Overall, spring cereals are rated as 38 per cent poor, 50 per cent fair, and 12 per cent good, while canola is reported as 72 per cent poor, and 28 per cent fair. Crop development is about two weeks behind normal.
- Pasture is rated as 92 per cent poor, and eight per cent fair, with a similar rating reported for tame hay.

Region Four: North West (Barrhead, Edmonton, Leduc, Drayton Valley, Athabasca)

- The region has received some precipitation during the last two weeks, mostly in the range of 5-25 mm. With the recent warm temperatures, crops and pasture have been showing some improvements, but in many areas, this has been limited, due to the lack of moisture. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 73 per cent poor, 24 per cent fair, and three per cent good, with a similar rating reported for sub-surface moisture.
- Crop development is about two weeks behind normal. In term of crop conditions, spring cereals are rated as 27 per cent poor, and 73 per cent fair, while canola is reported as 60 per cent poor, and 40 per cent fair. Due to frost damage, some fields have been reseeded.
- Pasture and tame hay growth has been very slow, and is reported as 73 per cent poor, 26 per cent fair, and one per cent good.

Region Five: Peace River (Fairview, Falher, Grande Prairie, Valleyview)

- Rain showers have been reported only in northern parts of the region. Crops have been recovering from frost, and are mostly in good condition, although development is about two weeks behind normal. Overall, spring wheat is rated as three per cent poor, 18 per cent fair, 70 per cent good, and nine per cent excellent, while canola is reported as two per cent poor, 13 per cent fair, 62 per cent good, and 23 per cent excellent.
- The recent warm and windy weather conditions have depleted much of the moisture reserves. Overall, surface moisture is rated as 25 per cent poor, 35 per cent fair, 35 per cent good, and five per cent excellent, while the sub-surface moisture is reported as 46 per cent poor, 43 per cent fair, and 11 per cent excellent.
- Pasture conditions are rated as 36 per cent poor, 46 per cent fair, and 18 per cent good. The rating of tame hay growth is 22 per cent poor, 47 per cent fair, and 31 per cent good.

Alberta Agriculture and Rural Development
Economics and Competitiveness Division
Statistics and Data Development Branch
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Chuanliang Su, Crop Statistician
E-mail: chuanliang.su@gov.ab.ca
Phone: 780-422-2887

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